

## The Way I Hear It

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### You Can Hear That – Seriously!?

As a hearing care professional, your shared listening time with your clients is usually limited to clinic appointments. You have a good idea of what they can hear, or *should* be able to hear, and you've seen their reaction to new levels of sound through hearing aids and cochlear implants.

But once they walk out the door, you're no longer privy to their soundscapes and how they react to what they hear, and what they discover they *don't* hear.

When a companion hears something outside my range of hearing or vision – a bird, perhaps, a creature skittering in the walls, a distant vehicle noise – my go-to reaction is amazement.

The upward chin-jerk and slight narrowing of eyes tells me they're listening hard to – something. I often rise to the bait and, both curious and annoyed, I ask, *what is it?* Then my jaw drops.

*You can hear that?*



They shrug it off as nothing out of the ordinary; it's what they do, no special skill required, blah blah. Yet this super-ability to hear and name a sound so far off my hearing radar (it's a *plane*, it's

a *bird*) not only amazes me but, occasionally, makes me doubt the hearer. *Get outta town! You really heard the dog, two doors over, COUGH?*

I may also feel fleeting, grief-tinged envy. *I wish I could hear that, like I used to.* How wonderful to be able to name the song playing in the background. I wonderful to hear that the music was *on!* I'd love to overhear and understand a person behind me – random comments provide information and connection. My people (the ones who don't hear well) may hear a voice making words, but then we have to ask for a repeat, perhaps with a louder voice, and while facing us, sucking spontaneity out the window.

But that's the hearing loss life. We do the best we can with our hearing aids, sound processors, remote microphones, captioning, and other visual information. We express our needs. We stand up for our rights. We understand the impact on other people. We try to *communicate* as best as we can.

Aren't we awesome?

Yet we're not immune to 'bad hearing' days marked with frustration and fatigue. We recognize that 'hearing' people may have certain career advantages – being a spy, for example, or any job where reading lips isn't an option. But we also have the power to tap into what they hear – by simply asking them to share the information. *Where's the bird, what does it sound like, is it a flock, why do you like birds so much?* There's no shame in second-hand information; it's still useful and my life is richer with it. There are times when I *need* to be advised of an important sound – the turn signal still on, a bicycle zooming up behind me, or water about to boil over.

But the joy of hearing works both ways. On the day of my cochlear implant switch-on, my husband and I went for a walk, to hear stuff. I saw a flock of geese flying way high in the sky. And then I *heard* them. This time it was my husband who looked amazed. *Honey, you could hear that?!* The joy on his face that day made up for everything.

Don't you wish you could go for a nature walk with your clients?